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Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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SECRETARY UDALL ORDERS NEW STEPS TO PROTECT THE BALD EAGLE

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today ordered new protective steps to halt the steady decline of the bald eagle--America's symbol--in the contiguous 48 states. He warned that this species is threatened over much of its range.

Secretary Udall directed that bald eagle nesting sites on National Wildlife Refuges be closed off to protect the birds from disturbance during the nesting season. Approximately one square mile will be provided for each nesting area.

Secretary Udall also instructed that nesting areas, where appropriate, be included in designated natural areas to prevent further disturbance of cover.

The order states that timber cutting operations must not be permitted within one-half mile of trees containing bald eagle nests, and potential nest sites must be carefully preserved. It extends to any or all of the approximately 300 refuges if eagle nesting is indicated.

In cases where trees with nests are in danger of being blown down, the trees are to be stabilized, if possible.

Secretary Udall said Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which administers the Refuges, will make every effort to inform the public of the plight of the bald eagle.

"The best protection that can be provided for the bald eagle," he said, "is that which can come from an informed and concerned public. This has been well demonstrated in the case of the whooping crane."

In addition to ordering increased protection for the bird that is the symbol of American Democracy, Secretary Udall also directed a stepped-up effort to protect the nests of golden eagles and ospreys.

The bald eagle already is classified as "rare" in the Southeastern States, where a survey in 1963 showed 230 active nests. Reproduction was successful in only 96 nests, with an estimated total of 144 young. The total population in the contiguous 48 states was estimated at about 5,000 in 1963.

John S. Gottschalk, Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, said bald eagle reproduction apparently was less successful last year than usual except in Everglades National Park in Florida, where about 50 pairs of adults nested with 50 percent success.

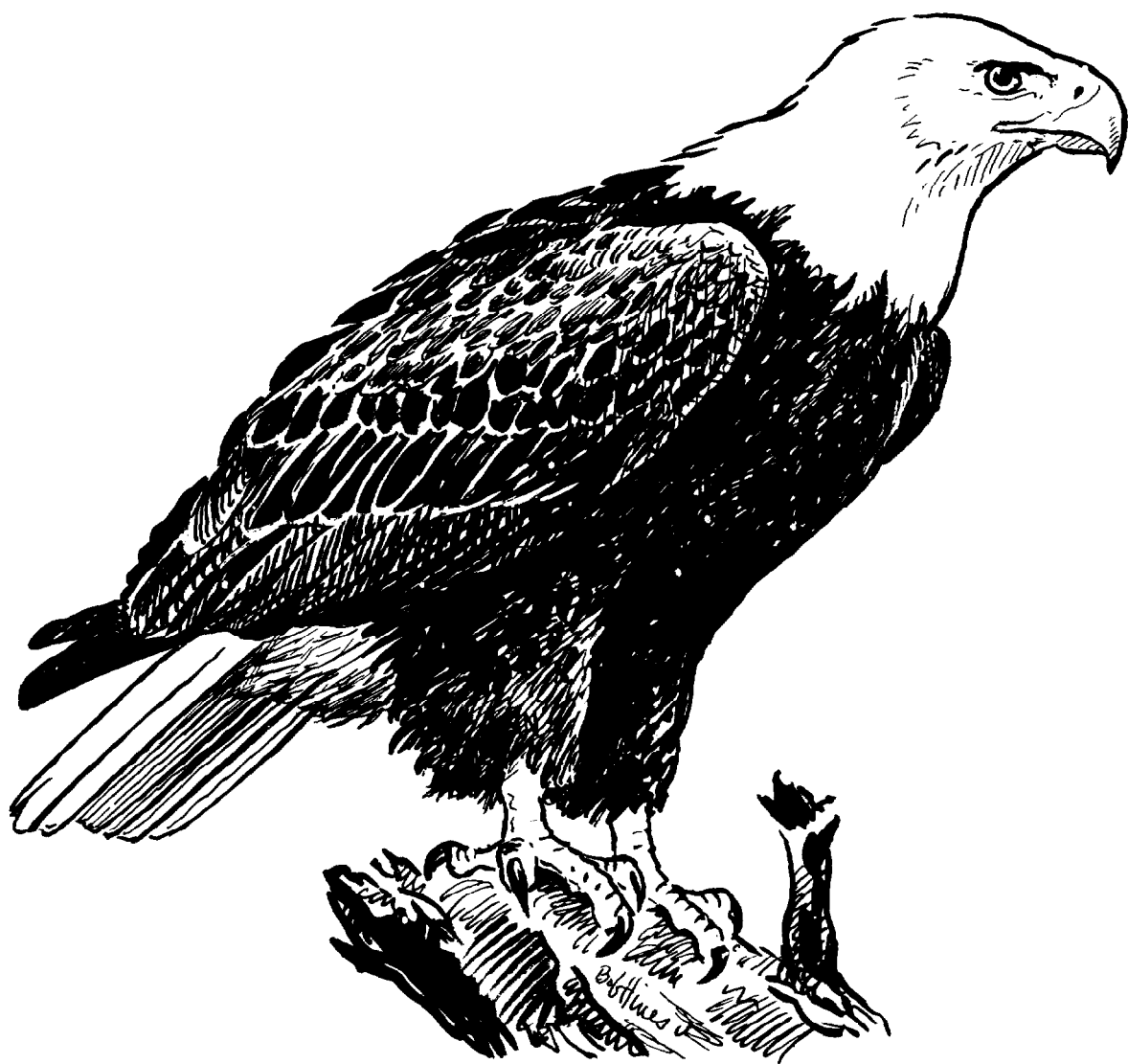
Causes of decline are believed to be illegal shooting, the increase of human population in primary nesting areas, disturbance of nesting birds, loss of nest trees, and a possible reduced reproduction as the result of pesticides taken in food.

Both bald and golden eagles are protected by Federal laws. Several states protect the bald eagle, some protect the golden eagle, and some protect both. The maximum Federal penalties for killing or possessing either is a fine of \$500, or six months imprisonment, or both. The laws are enforced by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which also is carrying out research to determine the effects of pesticides on eagle reproduction.

In the Southeast, the National Audubon Society is conducting intensive investigations of bald eagle distribution and breeding and is studying factors causing the decline in population.

The Florida Audubon Society has obtained agreements with landowners of 2,300,000 acres where nests are located to have the nesting areas treated as sanctuaries.

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**BALD EAGLE**